

## Testimony for the Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2022

My name is Diane Yormark and I am from Westport, Ct. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

My daughter is diagnosed with ID as well as a rare birth defect called "Hemihypertrophy." You can't image the difficulties she/we have faced over her past 24 years- surgeries, legal battles with the public schools, endless insurance and government documents equalling multiples of 100's of hours, and a lifetime of educating those who don't have a disability. I'm writing today because SAFETY NET is a critical component to our daughter's care. I implore the committee to reconsider safety net because it fills the holes of general care. IT IS, INDEED, A TRUE SAFETY NET BETWEEN CARE AND POVERTY, between thriving and surviving. It seems we are always fighting for the special needs kids. Always. This is real. It makes a real difference. Especially at a time on our planet when disease (and war) are claiming so much of our resources, please do not forget those of our local communities who have special needs and need your help, like my daughter.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee. My Child Matters.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mrs. Diane Yormark

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